

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 2661

LIMDIS

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, TW
SUBJECT: RESIGNATION OF CHIANG YEN-SHIH AND THE QUESTION
OF SUCCESSION

REF: (A) STATE 101748 (NOTAL), (B) TAIPEI 2239, (C) 76 TAIPEI
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1. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT CHIANG YEN-SHIH'S
RESIGNATION AS EDUCATION MINISTER HAS REDUCED HIS STATURE
OR POPULARITY WITHIN THE GROC. HIS FAREWELL FETE WAS
WELL ATTENDED, AND MANY GROC OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED TO
US THEIR BELIEF THAT THE EDUCATION MINISTRY HAS LOST AN
ABLE MAN. HIS RESIGNATION, AND ITS ACCEPTANCE, ARE VIEWED
BY MOST TO BE POLITICALLY EXPEDIENT BUT REGRETTABLE. HE
CONTINUES TO BE ACTIVE IN HIS MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT POSI-
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TIONS, INCLUDING COMMISSIONER OF JCRR AND VICE CHAIRMAN
OF THE NSC COMMITTEE FOR SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT.

2. HOWEVER, THERE ARE FACTORS THAT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO
THE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS RESIGNATION AND THAT CONTINUE TO WEIGH
AGAINST HIS BEING TAPPED AS CARETAKER SUCCESSOR TO CCK.
AS NOTED IN REF B, HE HAS CONTINUED TO PURSUE PERSONAL

PECCADILLOS WITH A NOTABLE LACK OF DISCRETION DESPITE, WE UNDERSTAND, A WARNING FROM CCK. HIS VERY PRO-AMERICAN ATTITUDE IS ALSO WELL KNOWN AND MIGHT WELL EXCLUDE HIM FROM THE RUNNING AS CARETAKER SUCCESSOR, ESPECIALLY IF CCK DIES OR IS INCAPACITATED WHILE NORMALIZATION OF US/PRC RELATIONS IS AN ACTIVE ISSUE OR SOON AFTER IT HAS BEEN CARRIED TO COMPLETION.

3. THE OUTLOOK FOR SOME OF THE OTHERS WHOM THE EMBASSY NAMED IN REF C AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR CARETAKER SUCCESSOR HAS ALSO DIMINISHED OVER THE PAST YEAR. FORMER FINANCE MINISTER LI KUO-TING HAS NEVER REGAINED HIS STRIDE FOLLOWING A HEART ATTACK; AND ECONOMIC MINISTER SUN YUN-HSUAN'S RECENT HEART ATTACK MAY ALSO REMOVE HIM FROM THE RUNNING.

4. OF THOSE WE IDENTIFIED LAST YEAR, ONLY MINISTER-WITHOUT-PORTFOLIO CHOU SHU-KAI AND GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK YU KUO-HUA APPEAR TO BE IN AS GOOD A POSITION NOW AS THEY WERE THEN. CHOU'S POSITION MAY HAVE ACTUALLY IMPROVED SOMEWHAT DURING THE PAST YEAR. HE IS WELL LIKED BY THE BUREAUCRACY AND IS ASSOCIATED CLOSELY WITH CCK BY THE PUBLIC AS A RESULT OF HIS CONTINUING FREQUENT TRAVELS WITH THE PREMIER.

5. IN EARLIER MESSAGES WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY THAT CCK MIGHT BEGIN GROOMING A SUCCESSOR AND POINTED TO WAYS IN WHICH HE MIGHT BEGIN SIGNALLING HIS CHOICE. SO FAR, HOWEVER, HE HAS NOT OPTED TO DO SO. THE CABINET RESHUFFLE LAST JUNE WAS PRIMARILY A SHUFFLE OF OLD FACES AND FAILED TO PROVIDE ANY SIGNALS ON POTENTIAL CANDIDATES.
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THE KMT PARTY CONGRESS WAS ALSO A DISAPPOINTMENT IN THIS REGARD; SOME NEW FACES JOINED THE JUNIOR RANKS OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, BUT THE SENIOR LEVELS WERE VIRTUALLY UNTOUCHED. THUS, THE PREMIER'S THINKING ON THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR IS NO CLEARER NOW THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO. WHILE THE RUMOR MILL CONTINUES TO SPECULATE ON VARIOUS CANDIDATES, SUCH SPECULATION APPEARS TO HAVE NO FACTUAL GROUNDING. NONE OF THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BE IN A POSITION TO KNOW HAS EVEN SUGGESTED THAT THE PREMIER MAY HAVE DECIDED UPON (OR IS EVEN CONSIDERING) A CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED HIM.

6. ALTHOUGH OTHER CABINET RESHUFFLES CANNOT BE RULED OUT BETWEEN NOW AND THE FEBRUARY 1976 MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FIRST CLEAR INDICATION OF WHOM CCK FAVORS AS HIS SUCCESSOR IS MOST LIKELY TO COME ONLY AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHEN THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE ELECTED (SEE REF C). FAILURE BY CCK TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SIGNAL HIS CHOICE AS SUCCESSOR WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THIS

QUESTION WILL NOT BE RESOLVED UNTIL AFTER HIS DEATH.
UNGER

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